

## CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A parking brake assembly, comprising:  
an engaging portion that is moveable into a braking position;  
a spring that biases the engaging portion into the braking position; and  
an electrically powered actuator that moves the spring against the bias of the spring to thereby release the engaging portion from the braking position.
2. The assembly of claim 1, wherein the actuator comprises an electric motor.
3. The assembly of claim 2, wherein the actuator comprises a servo motor.
4. The assembly of claim 2, wherein the actuator comprises a linear actuator.
5. The assembly of claim 1, including an arm associated with the actuator and a support near one end of the arm, the support engaging a portion of the spring such that movement of the arm causes movement of the spring against the bias of the spring.
6. The assembly of claim 4, wherein the arm rotates about an axis of the arm and the rotation of the arm causes linear movement of the support.
7. The assembly of claim 1, wherein the actuator moves into a disengage position where the engaging portion is released from the braking position when the actuator is energized at a first level and the actuator releases the spring to bias the engaging portion into the braking position when the actuator is energized at a second level.
8. The assembly of claim 7, wherein the second level includes the actuator being de-energized.

9. The assembly of claim 1, including a control switch that is actuatable by an operator of the vehicle and wherein the control switch controls the supply of electrical power to the actuator.

10. The assembly of claim 1, including an electronic controller that regulates power supplied to the actuator.

11. The assembly of claim 10, wherein the controller automatically cuts off power to the actuator under selected conditions.

12. A method of controlling a vehicle parking brake that is spring activated, comprising the steps of:

(A) permitting the spring to bias the parking brake into a braking condition; and

(B) selectively releasing the parking brake by electrically powering an electrical actuator that causes movement of the spring against the bias of the spring.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein step (B) includes energizing the actuator to thereby release the parking brake.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein step (A) includes de-energizing the actuator.